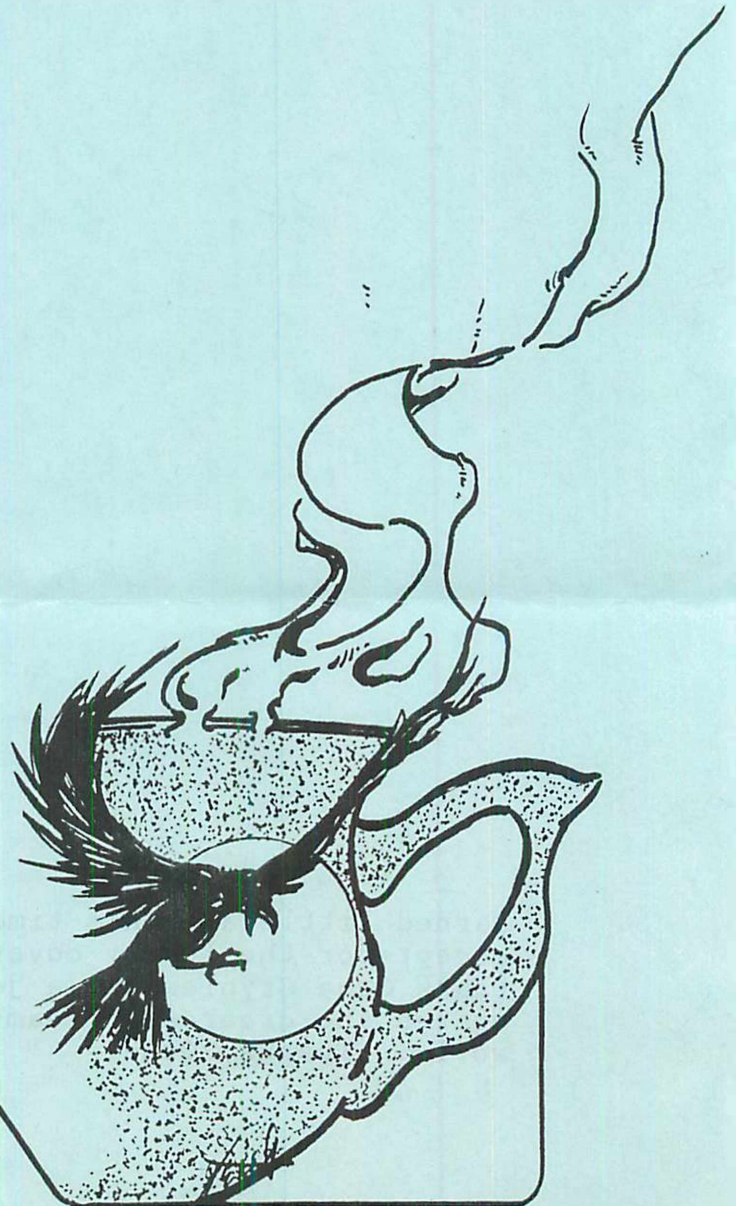


# THE ROGUE RAVEN

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Darned little art this time, practically nil, nada, none, except for the lovely cover, for which once again I must thank Gene Gryniewicz, a jewel of great price. Besides, he writes the greatest stream-of-consciousness letters in the world. Thanks, Gene.

This is THE ROGUE RAVEN 40 from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. This should have been around much sooner, but you know how it is. I've been busy finishing up a novel, finally have it printed and away, so now I've got a little time for this sort of foolishness. As you'll see from the first paragraphs, I started this around Thanksgiving, but it's getting close to the Ides of March. Or later. Matter of fact, I get more undependable as I move into my dotage. The end result is that you get it when you get it.

"Uulamets turned another page and another, opened up an inkpot and wrote, with a black raven quill." -- C.J. Cherryh -- RUSALKA.

I thought I might try to put some words down and see how far I might get in hopes of getting another issue of TRR in the mails before Christmas. [You see how well that worked.] It's not the best time of the year for surrendering such important words to the vagaries of the post, but what the hey, what the hey. I'm not even certain what I can dredge up to write about.

I'm beginning this on Thanksgiving evening. We've just returned from a family gathering at our daughter, Shannon's, home. Yes, indeed. it appears that the traditional Thanksgiving drumstick baton has been passed to the next generation. This is the first Thanksgiving that Anna Jo has not had to prepare the turkey and most of the other dishes. We did make pumpkin and cranberry chiffon pies (this latter is a specialty of mine) to take. Sean brought an apple-strawberry that was very good. He said it was the first time that he had tried that combination.

I was cheered by the thought that I wouldn't have to carve the bird, that task not being one of my favorites. I thought that job would fall to Chris, Shannon's new mate. You dreamer, you. I've never quite mastered carving a turkey. The white meat isn't too bad, but the dark is something else. A sharp knife is essential. "Daddy, will you cut the bird?" With a sigh, I complied. Shannon's knife was sharp enough, and I suppose I didn't do too badly. I didn't hear any complaints. I arranged it as nicely as I could on the platter, white meat on one side, dark on the other. I managed not to have the bird slide off the cutting board and onto the floor. All in all a success, I guess.

It was groaning table to be sure, with ten people present. I heard some reporter the other day say that it was the richest meal of the year for we Americans. Most of us would consume 7000 calories at Thanksgiving dinner. Not me, since the doctor has restricted my diet considerably. How nice not to have overeaten. No aching stomach and the regrets that come too late.

Lots of good conversation, much of it centering on trips various people had recently taken. I always enjoy hearing about people's traveling experiences, meeting new people, finding out how nice or how poor host areas have been, how beautiful or ugly the traveler can be.

Our granddaughter is at the age where she talks pretty well and it's a joy to hear her. But I'll save you from grandpa stories. Tim and Delane got in late, what with a conflict of dinner times with



Delane's grandparents. It was a good fun gathering, with plenty to be thankful for. Tim and Delane will be off to the Bering Sea after fish in another week and won't be home for Christmas. They plan to stay up there for several loads of fish, so will probably not be back for several months. With pockets a-jingle with coin to begin work on building a log house on their five acres near Mount Rainier.

Sean couldn't bring his date along, since she had other obligations. His new band, Medicine Show, is in the process of cutting demo tapes. They've had interest shown by four or five major recording companies, so perhaps his twenty-five years of playing rock and roll will finally pay off. I sure hope so. I think the band sounds like John Cougar Mellencamp meets Atlanta Rhythm Section; somebody else suggests The Byrds. We're keeping our fingers crossed. So it was a swell Thanksgiving. Now to gird up and get ready for Christmas. Will it be all over before you see this. Stay tuned.

### BLUEBOOKS

During Tankon Mike Horvat brought a large cardboard box into the cabin from his van. "What's that?" I asked. "Some of the Bluebooks I've been promising you I'd find. There's still another box, but I couldn't locate it."

The other guys dived into the box. I didn't have a chance. It didn't take long for things to settle down, however. We each became immersed in one issue after another, looking to see if we knew or remembered any of the authors. No one stopped to read any of the stories. Mostly we looked at the illustrations, which in Bluebook were numerous and quite good.

There were some duplicates but not many. Altogether there were 39 separate issues and we were kept busy looking at them for some time. Most were from the early 40s, the years of World War II. As a consequence most of the covers showed scenes from the war. And each issue contained several stories concerning the war. One cover I recall contained a full-sized illustration of a war bond. I remember during my childhood buying savings stamps to stick into a book; 25 cents each. When the book was full it represented \$18.75 and could be exchanged at the post office for a \$25 bond.

After 1946 there was a break and the last issues were nearly a full year from 1954. The magazine was changing by this time, and no longer contained all fiction. In one issue there was an article on building a post-war house and one on building a small pleasure boat from a kit.

My father-in-law had a subscription to Bluebook and Anna Jo recalls reading many stories from them when she was a youngster. Coupled with some issues that I recently acquired from Frank Robinson, I probably now own about 60 issues. I doubt seriously that I'll read all of the stories, and I certainly have no intention of attempting to collect a full run. There are, however, a lot of stories about the French Foreign Legion, and about the sea in the days of sail that will make interesting diversions from my usual reading fare.

## GHOSTS

It seems that sometimes I'm a follower, rather than a leader. Over the years I've listened to Jessica Salmonson talk about stories of ghosts and the supernatural. Recently, on a trip to Canada, we visited with Don and Shirley Livingstone. I'm always pleased to hear about Don's recent book acquisitions. This time he showed me a stack of trade paperbacks from England. Equation Chillers was the series title and they contained ghost stories by E.G. Swain, E. Nesbit, Bernard Capes, Jerome Jerome, Barry Pain and Robert Barr. They enticed me and I sent off to England for those that were available. Out of print quickly, they were, and with little chance that they'll be reprinted, or the series continued. Small publishers get gobbled up in England, as well as here, and this has happened to Equation. Their purchaser in turn was bought by yet another.

When I returned home I got to wondering what I had acquired over the years in terms of ghost stories. I managed over a week's time to gather most of them together in one place and was quite surprised. It turns out that it comprises a pretty good shelf full. I really hadn't thought much about those books and certainly hadn't read them. If anyone had asked if I had any books of ghost stories, I'd have laughed and said, "Oh, yeah, M.R. James Collected Ghost Stories." I remember buying that when in England. Keith Roberts and I were sort of doing Oxford book stores and he averred that I ought to have those.

At any rate that's now the one volume that I can't find. It may well have got packed into a box when I had to empty a large bookcase so that we could put down new carpet. That was seven years ago. The bookcase quickly filled up again, but not with the same books that resided there before. I still long to get my John Buchan and Arthur Ransome back out of boxes and into the house once more. I have a hunch that M.R. James is keeping good company with them.

The end result of all of this is that I've been spending a little time each evening reading a few pages of ghost stories. In Canada at Thanksgiving time I found THE OXFORD BOOK OF ENGLISH GHOST STORIES, selected and edited by Michael Cox and R.A. Gilbert (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989). It seemed a good place to start, since it was new to my house. A lot of stories compressed into nearly 500 pages of fairly small print. I've read fifteen of the stories but I have another 27 to go, so you can see that it's a goodly collection.

I'm not a list maker as a rule, but prompted with this new interest I listed all the stories in the collections that I've garnered over the years. So far it's come to 399 and who knows how many are in that M.R. James collection.

The reading has been an interesting departure from the mystery, sf and fantasy, Old West history, and natural history and outdoor stuff that I usually read. I must say that the story I've enjoyed most so far has been Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's "The Roll-call of the Reef," written in 1895. A drummer boy from the Marines and a trumpeter from the 7th



Light Dragoons, injured and cast ashore from two different ships in the same storm, become fast friends and make a strange pact. They seal it by locking together a drum and a trumpet with a combination lock whose secret is a six-lettered word known only to the two of them. The injured trumpeter retires; the boy goes back to his unit. Their reunion happens under very strange circumstances.

I was recently on a panel at a convention which was meant to suggest to people not to get into a rut and to try new things. I guess the ghost stories are allowing me to do just that. I'm enjoying them very much.

#### SEA STORIES BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thom Walls was over for a visit today, hauling along a thick folder of bibliographic pages. I don't remember when he started on this project, but I recall talking to him at various conventions about sea novels; you know, the Hornblower kind. We both seem to have an interest in that type of story, mainly centering around the Napoleonic period, not the modern stuff. So we enjoyed sharing our enthusiasm for certain authors. Sometimes I would have a new author to recommend to him and sometimes he's have one for me. One day (it seems years ago now) he asked me what I thought about putting together a small checklist of authors and titles of sea novels. I allowed as how I thought that was a good idea, and Thom began work on it.

Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately, time will tell) Thom has another friend, Matt Hargreaves, who has done bibliographic work on Anne McCaffrey and Thomas Burnett Swann. He convinced Thom that this should be a full blown bibliography, with first editions, and other editions, both hardcover and paper. Thom's work soon evolved into something more than a simple checklist for devotees. Today he came over to check some of the editions on my shelves. My collection is nowhere near complete. There are several authors whom I do collect assiduously, and others whom I read one novel by and decided that I didn't enjoy their writing. So I've dropped them. Still I have several shelves full, certainly enough to keep me busy reading when the urge for a sea story comes upon me. Probably my two favorites are Alexander Kent and Patrick O'Brian. I've not quite figured out why Patrick O'Brian has never been published in this country; my copies have come either from Canada or Britain.

At any rate, Thom garnered quite a bit of information from what was on my shelves. He's been pretty intent on not putting anything down unless he has actually seen the book and taken the information directly from it. He'll be going to England in the fall and hopes to find more information there, even perhaps visiting some of the publishers in London. After that he's going to try to wrap the bibliography up and go to press, leaving plenty of room for future additions and corrections from those who might buy his bibliography. I enjoyed having him over and being able to help him, however little. The bibliography is quite a prodigious thing, and I'm looking forward to its publication before Christmas of 1990. How's that for a little push, Thom?

## ANNA JO FINDS HOSPITAL HOSPITABLE

My dear, sweet, lovable lady-wife crossed dinner knives with some barbecued ribs and this is what happened. Sometime in early December we drove down I-5 to Kelso and Longview to do a couple of walks. (You knew an issue couldn't go by without me talking about volksmarching, didn't you?) There's a lovely dike along the river in Kelso, and manys the time I've said as we were driving by, "I'd sure like to walk along the top of that dike someday." By golly, that's where part of the walk went. We finished the walk around 3 in the afternoon, and stopped at a local restaurant for something to eat, before heading for Longview to do the Christmas night walk. Anna Jo chose the barbecued ribs; I was more conservative, having been put on a cholesterol and low grade diabetes diet early last year.

The ribs kicked back on Anna Jo sometime during the night walk, not badly, but enough to make her uncomfortable. Then nothing happened for a couple of weeks, and she had another minor attack. She called a consulting nurse who thought it might be a gall bladder attack. Her doctor thought it might be a peptic ulcer. After Christmas she had a good attack, wanted to die from the pain, and I had to take her to emergency.

Thus began the search for the culprit, which didn't take long. They isolated her problem as gall bladder, put her on a modified diet, and scheduled surgery. She had the surgery on a Monday morning, was on her feet by Monday night, off the pain killer by Tuesday, strolling the length of the hall by that afternoon. At Friday noon I brought her home. She's recovering just fine. Her surgeon was a woman, one whom the nurses said is one of the most professional on the staff. They also commented on her small hands, which require smaller incisions when she operates. Anna Jo had been warned about how painful the surgery was going to be by those of her colleagues who had already been through it. She had little pain and has only occasionally commented on discomfort. She's not ready for 10K walks yet; says the jarring as her feet hit the ground does give some discomfort. But as I write this it's only been three weeks since the surgery and she's doing splendidly well. She still tires easily, but is determined that she'll be in great shape by the first week of April, when we are scheduled for our annual pilgrimage to Reno.

It's been interesting having Anna Jo home. It's a rehearsal for when she retires in a couple of years. Methinks I'm going to have to change some of my work habits. I also will have to learn to not be such a growly bear in the morning. I rarely know my own name before 10 a.m. and can hardly speak civilly before noon. How did I manage all those years in the classroom and office? Beats me. Anyway, it's something I'll have to work on. Headphones will help somewhat in blocking out the noise from television. I rarely have it on; for Anna Jo, she's been catching up on the soaps. I may actually have to swamp out the bookroom, get rid of those stacks on the floor (you know the kind; you must all have them) and work in there. I know I put a desk in there one time. Now if only I could find it. We had a nice long discussion about all of this the other day on a drive home from visiting in Olympia.



Actually it was pretty rational, and we worked out several options to think about between now and the time she retires two years hence. Any one of them is all right for me. Mostly it gives me a couple of years to divest myself of a lot of books and other stuff that ought to have been cleaned out long ago.

#### REQUIEM FOR A WREN

Two summers back, in 1988, we spent a week on the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England. We stayed in the village of Carrisbrooke, very near the magnificent Carrisbrooke Castle (read J. Meade Faulkner's novel, Moonfleet, if you like intrigue, smuggling, wrongful imprisonment, and finally, justice done. Part of it takes place at Carrisbrooke.) The Bed and Breakfast in which we stayed was owned by a couple; the woman ran a very tight ship. Her husband was not much to be seen.

One evening as we were returning to the house, we met the husband going out. We stopped to chat for a bit and somewhere in the conversation he told us an interesting story. He is a native of the island; he and others in his family still own a farm there. He told us that during the war the brother of Nevil Shute, author of On the Beach and many other novels, was stationed on Wight. He fell in love with a woman who was in the WRENS. They often had the use of a jeep-type vehicle. Exactly what their connection with our man's farm was, I don't remember, but the man's family gave the couple a dog that they enjoyed.

As I recall the story, the young man was killed in a jeep accident, and the dog was run over by a tank during the buildup for the invasion of Normandy. The young woman, after the war, eventually went to Australia and found work on the Shute family's sheep ranch. She never told the family of her love of their son during the war, and eventually committed suicide at the sheep ranch.

Our host told us that Nevil Shute had written a novel using these facts. It was entitled Requiem for a Wren. I filed this information away, meaning to read the novel. One day not long ago, while visiting the library, I remembered this and had our branch order it from another branch which had it in the collection. The plot stays pretty close to what our host had told us, although it takes place across the Solvent on the British mainland, near Liskeard and Beaulieu, both of which we had visited. In the novel, the narrator returns home just after the woman had committed suicide, leaving absolutely no clues to her real name. The narrator had met the young woman one time during the war, remembered her face, and spends the night wondering about what had happened to her, what had possessed her to come to work for his parents, and why she had never revealed herself as the fiance of their son.

Intriguing to me was a section in which the narrator discovers that the woman had spent some years in Seattle. Obviously Shute had spent some time here as he described specific neighborhoods quite well. It's a book I'm sure I would never have read without having heard the story from our host, but once I had it in my hands, I went through it quickly, fascinated with the comparison of Shute's novel and our host's story.



## IMPOSTERS

I've either read or seen television reports recently about several imposters. It gives one pause to wonder why sometimes a person would insist that they were someone whom they were not. Tonight I saw a report on television about a woman who fell for a guy. He claimed to be a football player for a team in the NFL. Eventually she lent him \$29,000; I don't recall the purpose. Later he said it had been stolen. She began to get suspicious, had some detective work done, and found out he was not who he said he was. Went to jail. She didn't have enough sense; she later married him while he was in jail. Must have been one sweet talking guy. His reason for playing imposter is fairly plain.

I saw another report a while back that someone was claiming to be Kitty Kallen. Only the oldsters among you will remember who she was. One of the top songbirds of the 40s. She made a lot of records, and probably quite a bit of money. She was interviewed by a reporter in a nice home in California, surrounded by fine furniture and the mementos of her show business life. A woman who claimed to be Kitty Kallen lived in Florida and was a great favorite of a dj who had an oldie show. He, and many others in the area, were convinced that the woman was Kitty Kallen. When reporters caught up with her, she wouldn't talk, but her husband had plenty to say, insisting she was the real Kitty Kallen. Strange stuff!

There have been a couple of people who claimed to be Billy the Kid. A recent article in True West talked about a forensic historian who was devoting a great deal of time to comparing photos of Billy with those of a fellow named Ollie Roberts who claimed that he was Billy. Roberts died in 1950. He wasn't the first to make the claim. The historian, according to an article in tonight's paper, says that the computer comparisons he made of the photos failed to put the matter to rest. The coroner's jury in 1888 didn't have that problem. They said that the man who was shot by Sheriff Pat Garrett was indeed Billy the Kid.

In my youth I knew a man who later became known as The Great Imposter. You may remember a movie of that name which starred Tony Curtis. I was a student in a boarding high school at the time, and the man came to the institution with impeccable credentials as Dr. French. He taught sociology in the college at the same institution. He lasted for nearly half a year until a letter from a priest at a related institution to his friend at our institution mentioned that they had also had a Dr. French, who turned out to be an imposter. The president apparently called the FBI and they began a quiet investigation. The man's real name was Ferdinand Waldo Demeara. He was AWOL from the army, had jumped ship from the Navy, and pulled his imposture at several colleges. He served time, then later pulled the same thing in the Canadian Navy during the Korean War; actually performed an appendectomy on a shipmate while at sea (successfully, I might add). Later I read that he had settled down and was teaching school on the coast of Maine. It was always a wonder to those of us who knew him why he didn't spend his time taking a proper degree and settle down to an academic life or whatever it was he wanted. During the time I knew him, he used to occasionally come down to the stables where two other boys and I had our

horses. Mostly he just sat and talked with us for a while, while having a cigarette. He was always careful; never burned the place down.

Well, that's enough about imposters, I guess. It just occurred to me that all of these things had come within my purview lately; a sort of synchronicity. Except for the first case, it makes one wonder why a person would pretend to be someone they aren't. It's beyond me.

ENDIT

It seems to me that something that was begun clear back at Thanksgiving ought to get wrapped up before that holiday rolls around again. So I think I'll just quit here.

Anna Jo is doing fine and on the 31st of March we're tearing down the highway toward spring break and Reno, Nevada, 'the Biggest Little City in the World.' It says so, right over Virginia Street in big bright lights. You've read my reports of these annual jaunts before, so I'll say no more. Besides, I may have some new tale to tell about this trip, so I'll just save it until it happens.

The question is: when will you see another issue of TRR? Will it take another year before the old geezer takes computer in hand? Old??? Yeah, I just turned 60 this past month. And I now qualify for Elderhostel. But that's another story, too, which I'll save for the next issue. Meantime, keep sending those cards and letters and fanzines. I received a doozy of a fanzine a couple of weeks ago. It was from Mark Manning and is called TAND. It ran more pages than I ever cared to publish, close to a hundred. Terrific job. I've still managed to remain on some people's mailing lists. Thanks to Arthur Hlavaty for DILLINGER RELIC, Robert Lichtman for TRAPDOOR, Art Widner for YHOS, Tom Sadler for THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS, Don Thompson for DON-O-SAUR, Mike Glycer for FILE 770, Bruce Gillespie for THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW, Brian Earl Brown for STICKY QUARTERS, Colin Hinz for NOVOID, Dick and Nicki Lynch for MIMOSA, and probably several others whom I ought not to slight. These I remembered off the top of my head. And thanks also to the people who wrote cards and letters last issue. They are appreciated and if I had my act together they would be acknowledged. But you know me better than that.

So, it's off to Reno with a heighdy-hi and a heighdy-ho. Wish me luck at the machines. More when we return.